

Adventure



A Romance of The South Seas

BY
JACK LONDON

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here," he said simply. Then he addressed Von Blix. "As to the boys, you couldn't use them farther than Bina, and I'll lend you as many as you want as far as that. How many of your party are going and how soon will you start?"

"Ten," said Tudor; "nine men and myself."

"And you should be able to start day after tomorrow," Von Blix said to him. "The boats should practically be knocked together this afternoon. Tomorrow should see the outfit portioned and packed. As for the Martha, Mr. Sheldon, we'll rush the stuff ashore this afternoon and sail by sundown."

As the two men returned down the path to their boat Sheldon regarded Joan quizzically.

"There's romance for you," he said, "and adventure—gold hunting among the cannibals. Aren't you sorry you became a coconut planter?"

"What do you think of them?" she asked.

"Oh, old Von Blix is all right, a solid sort of chap in his fashion; but Tudor is a flyaway—too much on the surface, you know. If it came to being wrecked on a desert island I'd prefer Von Blix."

"I don't quite understand," Joan objected. "What have you against Tudor?"

"A man of Tudor's type gets on my nerves. One demands more repose from a man."

Joan felt that she did not quite agree with his judgment, and, somehow, Sheldon caught her feeling and was disturbed. He remembered nothing how her eyes had brightened as she talked with the newcomer.

A second boat had been lowered, and the outfit of the shore party was landed rapidly. A dozen of the crew put the knocked down boats together on the beach. There were five of these craft—lean and narrow, with flaring sides and remarkably long. Each was equipped with three paddles and several iron shod poles.

"You chaps certainly seem to know river work," Sheldon told one of the carpenters.

"We use 'em in Alaska. They're modeled after the Yukon poling boats, and you can bet your life they're crackjacks. This creek'll be a snap alongside some of them northern streams. Five hundred pounds in one of them boats an' two men can snake it along in a way that'd surprise you."

At sunset the Martha broke out her anchor and got under way, dipping her flag and saluting with a bomb gun. The union jack ran up and down the staff, and Sheldon replied with his brass signal cannon. The rainers pitched their tents in the compound and cooked on the beach, while Tudor dined with Joan and Sheldon.

Their guest seemed to have been everywhere and seen everything and met everybody, and, encouraged by Joan, his talk was largely upon his own adventures. Descended from old New England stock, his father a consul general, he had been born in Germany, in which country he had received his early education and his accent. Then, still a boy, he had rejoined his father in Turkey and accompanied him later to Persia, his father having been appointed minister to that country.

Tudor had gone through South American revolutions, been a rough rider in Cuba, a scout in South Africa and a war correspondent in the Russo-Japanese war. He had mushed dogs in the Klondike, washed gold from the sands of Nome and edited a newspaper in San Francisco. The president of the United States was his friend. He was equally at home in the clubs of London and the continent, the Grand hotel at Yokohama and the selectors' shanties in the Never Never country. He had shot big game in Siam, perched in the palm-trees, visited Tolstoy, seen the Passion play and crossed the Andes on muleback, while he was a living directory of the fever holes of West Africa.

Sheldon leaned back in his chair on the veranda, sipping his coffee and listening. In spite of himself he felt touched by the charm of a man who had led so varied a life. It seemed to him that the man addressed himself particularly to Joan. Sheldon watched her rapt attention, listened to her spontaneous laughter, quick questions and passing judgments and felt grow within him the dawning consciousness that he loved her. Then as if the scene had been prepared by a clever playwright, Utami came upon the veranda to report to Joan the capture of a crocodile in the trap they had made for her.

Tudor's face, illuminated by the match with which he was lighting his cigarette, caught Utami's eye, and Utami forgot to report to his mistress.

"Hello, Tudor," he said with a familiarity that startled Sheldon.

The Polynesian's hand went out, and Tudor, shaking it, was staring into his face.

"Who is it?" he asked. "I can't see you."

"Utami."

"And who the dickens is Utami? Where did I ever meet you, my man?"

"You no forget the Huahine?" Utami chided. "Last time Huahine sail?"

Tudor gripped the Tahitian's hand a second time and took it with genuine heartiness.

"There was only one Kanaka who came out of the Huahine that last voyage, and that Kanaka was Joe. The devil take it, man, I'm glad to see you, though I never heard your new name before."

"Yes, everybody speak me Joe along the Huahine. Utami my name all the time, just the same."

"But what are you doing here?" Tudor asked, releasing the sailor's hand and leaning eagerly forward.

"Me sail along Missie Lackahanna's schooner Miele. We go Tahiti, Raiatea, Tahaa, Bora-Bora, Manua, Tutuila, Tia, Savali and Fiji islands—plenty Fiji islands. Me stop along Missie Lackahanna in Solomon. Very soon she catch another schooner."

"He and I were the two survivors of the wreck of the Huahine," Tudor explained to the others. "Fifty-seven all told on board when we sailed from Huape, and Joe and I were the only two that ever set foot on land again. Hurricane, you know, in the Patumotu."

"You are so stupid the last few days," Joan complained to him. "You don't seem to have an idea in your head above black labor and coconuts. What is the matter?"

Sheldon smiled and bent a further retreat within himself, listening to the while to Joan and Tudor propounding the theory of the strong arm by which the white man ordered life among the lesser breeds. As he listened Sheldon realized, as by revelation, that that was precisely what he was doing. While they philosophized about it he was living it. But why talk about it? It was sufficient to do it and be done with it.

He said as much, dryly and quietly, and found himself involved in a discussion, with Joan and Tudor siding against him.

"The Yankees talk a lot about what they do and have done," Tudor said, "and are looked down upon by the English as braggarts. But the Yankee is only a child. He does not know of fe truly how to brag. He talks about it, you see. But the Englishman goes him one better by not talking about it. The Englishman's proverbial lack of bragging is a subtler form of brag, after all."

"I never thought of it before," Joan cried. "Of course, an Englishman performs some terrifically heroic exploit and is very modest and reserved, refuses to talk about it at all, and the effect is that by his silence he as much as says: 'I do things like this every day. It is as easy as rolling off a log. You ought to see the really heroic things I could do if they ever came my way.' Confess, Mr. Sheldon, don't you feel proud down inside when you've done something daring or courageous?"

Sheldon nodded.

"Then," she pressed home the point, "isn't disguising that pride under a mask of careless indifference equivalent to telling a lie?"

"Yes, it is," he admitted. "But we tell similar lies every day. It is a matter of training, and the English are better trained, that is all. Your countrymen will be trained as well in time. As Mr. Tudor said, the Yankees are young. Certainly we are proud inside of the things we do and have done—proud as Lucifer, yes, and prouder. But we have grown up and no longer talk about such things."

"I surrender," Joan cried. "You are not so stupid after all."

"Yes, you have us there," Tudor admitted. "But you wouldn't have had us if you hadn't broken your training rules."

"How do you mean?"

"By talking about it."

Joan clapped her hands in approval. Tudor lit a fresh cigarette, while Sheldon sat on, impudently silent.

Joan was looking intently across the compound and out to sea. They followed her gaze and saw a green light and the loom of a vessel's sails.

"I wonder if it's the Martha come back," Tudor hazarded.

"No, the sidelight is too low," Joan answered. "Besides, they've got the sweeps out. Don't you hear them? They wouldn't be sweeping a big vessel like the Martha."

"Besides, the Martha has a gasoline engine—twenty-five horsepower," Tudor added.

"Just the sort of a craft for us," Joan said wistfully to Sheldon. "I really must see if I can't get a schooner with an engine. I might get a second hand engine put in. If you were not so medieval I could be skipper and save more than the engineer's wages."

He did not reply to her thrust and she glanced at him. He was looking

out over the water, and in the lantern light she noted the lines of his face—strong, stern, dogged, the mouth almost chaste, but firmer and thinner lipped than Tudor's. For the first time she realized the quality of his strength, the calm and quiet of it, its simple integrity and resolute determination.

She glanced quickly at Tudor on the other side of her. It was a handsomer face, one that was more immediately pleasing. But she did not like the mouth. It was made for kissing and she abhorred kisses. For the moment she knew a fleeting doubt of the man. Perhaps Sheldon was right in his judgment of the other. She did not know, and it concerned her little: for boats and the sea and the things and happenings of the sea were of far more vital interest to her than men, and the next moment she was staring through the warm tropic darkness at the loom of the sails and the steady green of the moving sidelight and listening eagerly to the click of the sweeps in the rowlocks.

Nor did she take interest in the two men beside her till both lights, red and green, came into view as the anchor checked the onward way.

"It's the Minerva," Joan said decidedly.

"How do you know?" Sheldon asked, skeptical of her certitude.

"It's a kech to begin with. And, besides, I could tell anywhere the rattle of her main peak blocks—they're too large for the halyard."

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making a show of all his qualities. Sheldon knew himself for a brave man, therefore he made no advertisement of the fact. Life pulsed steadily and deep in him, and it was not his nature needlessly to agitate the surface so that the world could see the splash he was making. And the effect of the other's amazing exhibitions was to make him retreat more deeply within himself and wrap himself more thickly than ever in the nervous, stoical calm of his race.

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A dark figure crossed the compound diagonally from the beach gate, where

whoever it was had been watching the vessel.

"Is that you, Utami?" Joan called.

"No, Missie; me Matapu," was the answer.

"What vessel is it?"

"Me 'tink Minerva,"

Joan looked triumphantly at Sheldon, who bowed.

"If Matapu says so it must be so," he murmured.

"But when Joan Lackland says so you doubt," she cried, "just as you doubt her ability as a skipper. But never mind, you'll be sorry some day for all your unkindness. There's the boat lowering now, and in five minutes we'll be shaking hands with Christian Young."

Lalapapu brought out the glasses and cigarettes and the eternal whisky and soda, and before the five minutes were past the gate clicked and Christian Young, tawny and golden, gentle of voice and look and hand, came up the bungalow steps and joined them.

News, as usual, Young brought—news of drinking at Guvutu, where the men boasted that they drank between drinks; news that the Matamba had gone on a reef in the Shortlands and would be laid off one run for repairs.

"That means five weeks more before you can sail for Sydney," Sheldon said to Joan.

"And that we are losing precious time," she added ruefully.

"If you want to go to Sydney the Upolu sails from Tulagi tomorrow afternoon," Young said, "and you can catch her as late as 5 tomorrow after noon—at least so her first officer told me."

"But I've got to go to Guvutu first," Joan looked at the men with a whimsical expression. "I've some shopping to do. I can't wear these Berande curtains into Sydney. I must buy cloth at Guvutu and make myself a dress during the voyage down. I'll start immediately—in an hour. Lalapapu, you bring me one fella Adamu along me. Tell 'em that fella Orndri make me 'kai-kai take along whaleboat." She rose to her feet, looking at Sheldon. "And you, please, have the boys carry down the whaleboat—my boat, you know. I'll be off in an hour."

"I'll go over with you," Sheldon announced.

"Let me run you over in the Minerva," said Young.

She shook her head laughingly.

"I'm going in the whaleboat. You, Mr. Sheldon, as my partner. I cannot permit to desert Berande and your work out of a mistaken notion of courtesy. And as for you, Captain Young, you know very well that you just left Guvutu this morning, that you are bound for Maru and that you said yourself that in two hours you are getting under way again."

"But may I not see you safely across?" Tudor asked, a pleading note in his voice that rasped on Sheldon's

nerves.

"No, no, and again no," she cried. "You've all got your work to do, and so have I. I came to the Solomons to work, not to be escorted about like a doll. For that matter, here's my escort, and there are seven more like him."

Adamu Adam stood beside her, towering above her, as he towered above the three white men.

"We start in an hour in the whaleboat for Guvutu, big brother," Joan said to him. "Tell your brothers, all of them, so that they can get ready. We catch the Upolu for Sydney. Leave the guns behind. Turn them over to Mr. Sheldon. We won't need them."

"If you are really bent upon going," Sheldon began.

"That's settled long ago," she answered shortly. "I'm going to pack now."

An hour later the three men had shaken hands with Joan down on the beach. She gave the signal, and the boat shoved off, six men at the oars, the seventh man for and Adamu Adam at the steering sweep. Joan was standing up in the stern sheets reiterating her goodbyes, a slim figure of a woman in the tight fitting jacket she had worn ashore from the wreck, the long barreled Colt's revolver hanging from the loose belt around her waist, her clear cut face like a boy's under the Stetson hat that failed to conceal the heavy masses of hair beneath.

"You'd better get into shelter," she called to them. "There's a big squall coming, and I hope you've got plenty of chain out, Captain Young. Goodbye! Goodbye, everybody!"

Her last words came out of the darkness, which wrapped itself solidly about the boat. Yet they continued to stare into the blackness in the direction in which the boat had disappeared, listening to the steady click of the oars in the rowlocks until it faded away and ceased.

"She is only a girl," Christian Young said with slow solemnity. The discovery seemed to have been made on the spur of the moment. "She is only a girl," he repeated with greater solemnity.

"A dashed pretty one and a good traveler," Tudor laughed. "She certainly has spunk, eh, Sheldon?"

"Yes, she is brave," was the reluctant answer, for Sheldon did not feel disposed to talk about her.

They gained the veranda, where they sat in silence over their whisky, each man staring straight out to sea, where the wildly swinging riding light of the Minerva could be seen in the lulls of the driving rain.

An hour later Christian Young stood up, knocked out his pipe and prepared to go aboard and get under way.

"She's all right," he said, apropos of nothing spoken and yet distinctly relevant to what was in each of their minds. "She's got a good boat's crew, and she's a sailor herself. With this favoring bit of breeze she has sail on already, and she'll make Guvutu by daylight. Good night."

"I guess I'll turn in, old man," Tudor said, rising and placing his glass on the table. "I'll start the first thing in the morning. It's been disgraceful the way I've been hanging on here. Good night."

Sheldon, sitting alone, wondered if the other man would have decided to pull out in the morning had Joan not sailed away. Well, there was one bit of consolation in it—Joan had certainly lingered at Berande for no man, not even Tudor. It was not very flattering, but what could any man count in her eyes when a schooner waiting to be bought in Sydney was in the wind? What a creature! What a creature!

Berande was a lonely place to Sheldon in the days that followed. In the morning after Joan's departure he had seen Tudor's expedition off on its way up the Balesuna, in the late afternoon through his telescope he had seen the smoke of the Upolu that was bearing Joan away to Sydney, and in the evening he found himself standing staring at the nail upon which from the first she had hung her Stetson hat and her revolver belt.

Why should he care for her? he demanded of himself angrily. Never had he encountered one who had so thoroughly irritated him, rasped his feelings, smashed his conventions and violated nearly every attribute of what had been his ideal of woman. But he loved her. That was the point of it all, and he did not try to evade it. He was not sorry that it was so. He loved her. That was the overwhelming, astounding fact.

Once again he discovered a big enthusiasm for Berande. It must succeed not merely because Joan was a partner in it, but because he wanted to make that partnership permanently binding. Three more years and the plantation would be a splendid paying investment. They could then take yearly trips to Australia and oftener, and an occasional run home to England—or Hawaii—would come as a matter of course.

He undertook more clearing of bush, and clearing and planting went on under his personal supervision at a faster pace than ever before. He experimented with premiums for extra work performed by the black boys and yearned continually for more of them to put to work. Blacks he must have, and if Joan were fortunate in getting a schooner three months at least must elapse before the first recruits could be landed on Berande.

To be continued

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Baptist Sunday School, 9:30 a. m. C. E. Lightfoot, Superintendent. Prayer Meeting Sunday at 11 a. m. and 7:30 p. m. Baptist Aid Society meets Monday after Second Sunday, every month. Mrs. A. B. Skillman, President.

Methodist Church

Methodist Sunday School, 9:30 a. m. Ira D. Behen, Superintendent. Preaching every Sunday at 11 a. m. and 7:30 p. m. Frank Lewis, Pastor. Prayer meeting Wednesday, 7:30 p. m. Epworth League, regular service Sunday 8:45 p. m.; business meeting first Tuesday night each month. Miss Margarette Burn, President. Ladies' Aid society meets first Monday each month Mrs. Forrest Lightfoot, President. Ladies' Missionary society meets second Sunday in every month. Mrs. Vigil Babbage, President. Choir practice Friday night 7:30, A. H. Murray, Director.

Presbyterian Church

Presbyterian Sunday School 9:45 a. m.—Conrad Sigel, Superintendent. Preaching every Third Sunday. Rev. Adair, Minister. Prayer meeting Tuesday, 7:30 p. m. Ladies' Aid Society meets Wednesday after Third Sunday every month. Mrs. Chas. Satterfield, President.

Catholic Church

First Sunday of each month, Mass, Sermon, and Benediction, 9:00 a. m., other three Sundays at 10:15 a. m. On week days Mass at 7:30 a. m. Catechetical instruction for the children on Saturdays at 8:30 a. m. and on Sundays at 9:30 a. m. and 2:30 p. m.

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